

**MINUTES**  
**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

**LANSING CENTER**  
**333 E. MICHIGAN**  
**LANSING**

**APRIL 6, 2006**

**PRESENT FOR THE COMMISSION**

Keith Charters, Chair  
Mary Brown  
Darnell Earley  
Bob Garner, Vice-Chair  
Jerry Hall  
John Madigan  
Frank Wheatlake

**PRESENT FOR STAFF**

Becky Humphries, Director  
Mindy Koch, Resource Management Deputy  
Jim Ekdahl, UP Field Deputy  
Other DNR Staff

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Chairman Charters** called the Committee of the Whole meeting of the NRC to order at 3:10 p.m. on Thursday, April 6, 2006.

**Legislative Update**

**Rodney Stokes, Legislative Liaison**, presented a DNR legislation update on several bills including several forestry bills.

**Chairman Charters** expressed concern with several of these bills including House Bill 5628 which requires the first 90,000 cords of wood harvested from State lands to go to the School Aid fund and local units of government. The DNR estimates that this would take approximately \$4.4 million from the Forest Development fund and would only benefit those townships that have Commercial Forest lands. **Chairman Charters** encouraged Commissioners to get involved in this legislation that would be devastating to the DNR. He is concerned with the potential precedent that would be set in using the revenue for something other

than the resource. This legislation would also put the Forest Finance Authority in jeopardy.

Other legislation was discussed. **Commissioner Wheatlake** attended a House Appropriations Subcommittee meeting recently and encouraged the Commissioners to participate as the DNR bills move through the process. **Chairman Charters** stated that the role of the Commissioners is changing and all need to get politically involved with natural resources issues.

**Director Humphries** thanked the NRC for weighing in on pending legislation.

### **Washington D.C. Report**

**Carol Bambery, DNR Legal Services and Legal Counsel to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA)**, submitted a written update on federal issues. She noted that what was the International AFWA, has now been renamed to AFWA.

**Director Humphries** chairs the AFWA Fish and Wildlife Health Committee that is addressing emerging wildlife diseases. The Committee is developing a plan to address these diseases and intends to have the plan developed by September of 2006. She noted that the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, has issued a new advisory on avian influenza.

### **Wildfire Report**

**Don Johnson, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division (FMFM)**, reported that 2005 was a relatively normal year for forest fires. It began briskly causing Director Humphries to prohibit burning on state land in April 2005. Currently, there are no drought conditions in Michigan and drought conditions are not expected this spring and into early summer. However, during the higher fire pressure months there will be a shortage of firefighters for large fires during high pressure periods. The FMFM may need to ask for assistance from other DNR divisions during that time.

### **Up Deer Workshop**

**Director Humphries** reported that a deer workshop will be conducted in Marquette on April 22, 2006. This will be the first of several held throughout the state.

### **Education And Outreach – New Appointee**

**Pat Stewart, Office of Communications**, introduced **Kevin Frailey** who was recently appointed the position of DNR's Education and Outreach Manager.

### **Bob Couvereur Is Retiring**

**David Freed, Chief, Office of Land and Facilities**, announced that **Bob Couvereur, Real Estate Services Section Manager**, is retiring effective May 1 after 30 years of DNR employment. He will be missed. **Chairman Charters** noted that Bob was one of the first DNR employees he met when he was appointed to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board and said he is has been a very dedicated employee.

\* \* \*

The Committee of the Whole meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

\* \* \*

The Regular meeting of the Natural Resources Commission convened at 4:30 p.m.

### **PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

Representative Joel Sheltroun  
Mark Crisp, Michigan United Deer Hunters  
Jim De Clerck, Saginaw Field and Stream Club  
Chuck DeLeeuw, Michigan Traditional Bowhunters  
John and Ruth Depner, Caseville  
George Lindquist, UP Whitetails of Marquette County  
Bob McReavy, Nester Lodge  
Chauncy Moran  
John Ormsby, Afton Deer Management  
Greg Preston, Iosco County

**Representative Joel Sheltroun** appeared a year ago expressing concerns about low deer populations. Since last year, there has been a movement for petitions to address the low deer population and the number of antlerless permits issued in the northeast Lower Peninsula. He presented a petition signed by approximately 8000 individuals. He also summarized the results of a survey of Michigan deer hunters taken by 334 people. He is looking for solutions and wants to work with the NRC on these solutions. He said that deer hunting in northern Michigan has dropped off drastically. He also encouraged the consideration of the aesthetic aspects of clear cutting including using buffer zones. He said the mood of the Legislature currently does not and will not include license fee increases until the hunting quality is addressed.

**Commissioner Garner** asked what portion of Representative Sheltroun's four county district is public versus private. **Representative Sheltroun** responded

that currently, Roscommon County is 60 percent public; Ogemaw County has less public land.

**Commissioner Garner** asked if there is any support in the legislature for undoing the combination license. **Representative Sheltroun** responded that nothing has been addressed on this issue because the number one concern is population goals. His concern was that the DNR is proposing a 34 percent reduction of deer in Ogemaw County. Staff stated that the goals have not been prepared because the harvest data is not in yet. He does not take issue with the combination license.

**Commissioner Garner** asked if Representative Sheltroun requests ending issuance of doe permits (antlerless licenses). **Representative Sheltroun** said no.

**Commissioner Brown** said it is known that deer are dependent on habitat. She asked if there have been changes in the past 10 years that reduce the amount of habitat available? **Representative Sheltroun** said a number of farms are not producing crops any longer, but he believes the food supply exists to hold more deer. He does not believe that the DNR's estimates are correct.

**Chairman Charters** asked where a majority of the surveys came from. **Representative Sheltroun** responded that the survey was completed by many northern counties - not just his district.

**Chairman Charters** urged Representative Sheltroun to attend the May, June and July NRC meetings where decisions will be made regarding many of the deer regulations and quotas.

**Representative Sheltroun** noted that some areas in Ogemaw County have deer and some do not. He has recommended that deer be managed within the counties, but staff does not agree. **Chairman Charters** commented that, since 1995, the employee count for the DNR has gone from 1837 to approximately 1300, leaving less employees to do more, meaning that the legislature has reduced the DNR's workforce by one third.

**Bob McReavy, Nester Lodge, Roscommon County,** believes deer populations in his area are lower than the estimates indicate. He also expressed concern regarding clear cutting, stating that cutting took place years ago in areas that have not regenerated. He recommended eliminating antlerless permits. **Chairman Charters and Commissioner Garner** questioned Mr. McReavy's logic as it is their understanding that more deer mean more browse, therefore, less or no forest regeneration. Discussion ensued regarding the need for more exclosures to protect areas and allow regeneration.

**Mark Crisp, Michigan United Deer Hunters**, stated that deer populations are decreasing and hunters are unhappy about that. **Commissioner Wheatlake** said this issue is being addressed and requested that the various groups be proactive in the solution rather than focusing on what is wrong. He said there are many avenues in which to do that. **Commissioner Hall** believes that surveys will indicate sound scientific management. **Commissioner Garner** said that the Commissioners are avid hunters also and would not jeopardize hunting quality to please special interest groups such as the Michigan Farm Bureau.

**Commissioner Garner** believes that Mr. Crisp has been misinformed about some issues, i.e., deer goals have not been set as yet so there is nothing definitive at this time. **Mr. Crisp**, when asked, stated that he is not in favor of a hunting quiet period, and encouraged a 20-25 deer per square mile population goal. He also said he would like less antlerless permits issued.

**Chuck DeLeeuw, Michigan Traditional Bowhunters (MTB)**, recommended that deer management units (DMUs) be based on land ownership; and said the MTB does not believe cutting back on antlerless permits is a viable, long-term solution to balancing the deer herd with the habitat. **Commissioner Wheatlake** urged Mr. DeLeeuw to remain involved in the deer management process.

**Chauncy Moran** discussed sulfide mining in the UP. Kennicott Corporation has applied for a sulfide mining permit which is being reviewed. He said he is proud to be associated with the DNR staff working on this permit, and it will be a difficult decision.

**Chairman Charters** entered a letter into the record from the following:

**George Lindquist, UP Whitetails of Marquette County**: A letter to Senator Mike Prusi recommends returning the deer bag limit decision-making authority to the NRC; suggests ending all deer hunting in the UP by December 10; supports mandatory deer harvest registration; supports issuing more bear tags; and suggests that leftover bear tags be sold over the counter.

**John Ormsby, Afton Deer Management**, recommended that no antlerless permits be issued in Cheboygan County.

**Jim De Clerck, Saginaw Field and Stream Club**, suggests that the NRC request the DNR to revert to the bear license spread at 2005 levels; and suggests that the NRC should review any and all road closures to determine if "reasonable access" is available to the public.

**Greg Preston, Iosco County**, may not archery hunt any longer due to low deer numbers; and expressed concern with the amount of tree harvesting in the northern Lower Peninsula.

**John and Ruth Depner, Caseville**, expressed concern regarding the increasing deer population in their area and the deer damage that results.

\* \* \*

**Chairman Charters** adjourned the Public Appearances portion of the meeting and immediately convened the Regular Meeting of the NRC at 5:45 p.m.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 6, 2006 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING**

**Commissioner Garner made a motion, supported by Commissioner Wheatlake, for approval. Motion unanimously carried.**

### **2006 GOALS - NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

1. Continue to evaluate and ensure timely implementation of the Land Consolidation Strategy.
2. Approve and monitor generally accepted management practices under the Right-to-Forest Act to promote sustainable forestry activities on public and private land.
3. Develop comprehensive future funding concepts and strategies to secure the financial stability of the Department through the Hunting and Fishing License Package Development Work Group.
4. Actively participate, engage and respond to the Legislature on various natural resource issues.
5. Strengthen existing partnerships and forge new partnerships to deliver the DNR's messages and information. Evaluate and strengthen DNR education and outreach programs like LAPs and hunter education.
6. Increase emphasis on wildlife habitat issues to encourage and facilitate the Department's partnering with wildlife habitat groups and private property owners to manage their timber along with developing long-term plans for agricultural habitat enhancements.
7. Assessing our involvement as a Department in aspen management. Because good aspen management is the cornerstone of deer, woodcock, ruffed grouse and varying hare management along with many other species, we need to investigate management plans and encourage both the private sector and other governmental agencies to do the same.

8. Continue discussion on accessibility and review of current laws and policies to include more opportunity for hunters and anglers with disabilities. The procedure for meeting this goal will be carried out through a subcommittee chaired by Commissioner Hall.

**Commissioner Earley made a motion, supported by Commissioner Garner, to adopt the 2006 NRC Goals as listed. Motion unanimously carried.**

### **MORATORIUM ON QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT (QDM) PROPOSALS**

**Commissioner Hall made a motion, supported by Commissioner Madigan, that the NRC adopt a moratorium on accepting proposals to establish mandatory QDM regulations. This moratorium will be in effect for a minimum of two years. Motion unanimously carried.**

### **DIRECTOR'S ACTION**

Following discussion, **Director Humphries** stated her intent to approve and sign all Director's Action Items on the agenda.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries**

**Committee Chair Garner** said that the meeting of the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries convened at 12:15 p.m. at the Lansing Center, Lansing. Commissioners Garner, Hall and Madigan were present for the Committee. Commissioners Charters, Brown Hall and Earley were also present. (Minutes are attached.)

#### **NRC Policy Committee On Technology, Information, Marketing And Education (TIME)**

**Committee Chair Brown** reported that the meeting of the NRC Policy Committee on TIME convened at 10:30 a.m. at the Lansing Center, Lansing. Commissioners Brown, Garner and Charters were present for the Committee. Commissioners Garner, Hall and Madigan were also present.

**Karen Gourlay**, Office of Communications, gave a presentation of the State Explorer Program and **Colleen Steinman**, Parks and Recreation Division, gave a presentation of the Programs in the Parks and Recreation Areas. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

### **Hunting And Fishing License Package Development Work Group**

Work Group **Chairman Wheatlake** noted that he was not present at the March 20, 2006 Work Group meeting and **Steve Arwood** (co-chair) chaired the meeting. Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division made presentations, as well as Law Division who presented follow-up materials from the previous meeting. **Commissioner Wheatlake** said the next meeting will be held on April 10 and there would likely be one more prior to recessing the Work Group until the fall of 2006.

### **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

**Commissioner Garner** attended several meetings with various groups; will participate in "Ask the DNR" on CMU public TV; and said he prefers phone calls over e-mails.

**Commissioner Earley** indicated he had received a carved dog head in a snare in the mail that indicated the damage a snare can do to a dog.

**Commissioner Wheatlake** met with legislators on DNR related issues and encouraged other Commissioners to do the same.

**Commissioner Madigan** attended meetings relative to DNR matter; and received several phone calls. He urged continued dialog with UP hunters.

**Commissioner Brown** spent a large amount of the past month in Florida.

**Chairman Charters** spent a great deal of time discussing DNR issues with Legislators.

\* \* \*

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.



### **NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries**

Committee Chair Bob Garner called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m.

Present were Committee members Commissioners Bob Garner, John Madigan, and Jerry Hall. Commissioners Charters, Brown, Earley, and Wheatlake were also present.

**Gary Whelan, Fisheries Division**, presented information on the **National Fish Habitat Initiative**. With aquatic habitat being lost at an alarming rate, a National Fish Habitat Initiative was created to work on the declining quality and quantity of habitat, which affects recreational fishing and boating opportunities. The mission of this group is to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people. Gary outlined the goals and objectives of the group and what the group's next steps will be. Gary is chair of the Science team. There are numerous national organizations that are part of the NFHI Core Work Group.

**Bill Sterrett and Deb Begalle, FMFM Division**, provided an overview of the **impacts that deer can have on state forests**. Commissioner Garner prefaced the introductions by stating that he had asked these two individuals to come and discuss the impact that deer can have on forests. Commissioner Garner has requested that more presentations be shown that talk about deer and how they affect different habitats. Bill and Deb explained that deer can cause some forest species such as cedar and northern hardwoods to have poor regeneration. Deer impacts forest biodiversity, structure, and composition. Both Bill and Deb also discussed what we can learn by using exclosures within the forest. Deb also stressed that high deer numbers can also indirectly affect the DNR's forest certification.

**Faye McNew, Wildlife Division**, provided information concerning the **Mute Swan management change**. Proposed order authorizes a permit to: stabilize or reduce mute swan populations; prevent interference with native species; prevent interference with threatened and endangered species; and protect public health, safety or welfare. This recommendation will come to the Commission next month for action.

**Bill Moritz, Chief, Wildlife Division**, provided additional information concerning the **2006 black bear license quotas**. The quotas were brought to the Commission last month for information. The NRC asked several questions about whether we had fully considered the social concerns about bear population size. Therefore, the Wildlife Division took another look at the proposed quotas and changed them to be generally the same as last year. However, there would be a movement of 90 licenses from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> hunt period in the Bergland unit

and 50 licenses from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> in the Carney unit. This recommendation will come to the Commission next month for action.

**Al Stewart, Wildlife Division**, provided information concerning the **2006 fall wild turkey season dates and license quotas**. Approximately 56,450 licenses would be available. The dates would be October 2 through November 14. There will be 31,935 square miles open to hunting and 14 different hunt units. This recommendation will come to the Commission next month for action.

**Rod Clute, Wildlife Division**, provided information concerning the **2006 antlerless license process**. Rod presented the timeline from April to July. A license process revision was brought forth that would allow the NRC to establish open or closed status for each DMU. Due to the change to the timeline, the NRC is being asked to change the antlerless license application period to July 15 through August 15. This recommendation will be before the Commission next month for action.

**Brent Rudolph, Wildlife Division**, provided information concerning the **Evaluation of Quality Deer Management (QDM) in the U.P.** He presented the evaluation results of the survey participants in the QDM. DMU 122 had sufficient support to recommend continuation. This QDM unit would continue for five years. DMUs 152, 155, and 252 had insufficient support to recommend continuation. This recommendation will come to the Commission next month for action.

**Rod Clute, Wildlife Division**, provided information concerning the **2006 Elk proposed hunt unit boundaries and season dates**. The early and December hunt units were altered. The proposed dates for the season hunts are: early split season - August 26 through 30 and September 15 through 18; and the December season is from December 5 through 12. This recommendation will come to the Commission in May for action.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.